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HOUSE APPROVES FUNDS FOR DENTAL SERVICES IN NW WISCONSIN

Appropriations Measure Includes \$225,000 for CESA 11 Dental Services

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) announced today that the U.S. House of Representatives has approved his request for \$225,000 in the FY2008 Labor, Health, Education Appropriations Bill to help CESA 11's Rural Health Dental Clinic program continue to provide dental care to residents of northwest Wisconsin.

“We’re facing a ‘silent epidemic’ of oral disease in this country because of a lack of available dental care, especially in rural areas and for

the most vulnerable among us. Children have died because of infections brought on by the absence of dental services,” Obey said. “That’s why we’ve made improving access to dental care a priority in next year’s budget, and why community-based dental health centers, like those run by CESA 11, are so important. They help provide affordable dental care to thousands of rural Northwestern Wisconsin residents who would otherwise find it difficult or impossible to reach a dentist they could afford.”

The Rural Health Dental Clinic program provides preventative dental hygiene, restorative dental services (including dentures), and oral health education to low-income, disabled, and nursing home patients in Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Douglas, Dunn, Iron, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Price, Sawyer, St. Croix, and Washburn Counties through dental clinics in Hayward, Menomonie, and Turtle Lake, as well as through mobile outreach sites. With two full-time dentists, two part-time dentists, three full-time hygienists, and nine dental support staff, the clinics saw over 12,000 patients last year.

The Labor, Health, Education Appropriations measure must still be approved by the Senate and signed by the President before it becomes law. “But having these funds included in today’s House approved version means a major hurdle has been cleared,” Obey concluded.

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